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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-second session
Items 38 and 39 of the preliminary list*
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-second year

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/43 D of 2 December 1986 on the question of convening an international peace conference on the Middle East. The operative part of the resolution reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Takes note with appreciation of the reports of the Secretary-General;

"2. Determines that the question of Palestine is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East;

"3. Reaffirms once again its endorsement of the call for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in conformity with the provisions of the resolution 38/58 C;

"4. Stresses the urgent need for additional concrete and constructive efforts by all Governments in order to convene the Conference without further delay;

* A/42/50.

"5. Endorses the call for setting up a preparatory committee, within the framework of the Security Council, with the participation of the permanent members of the Council, to take the necessary action to convene the Conference;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, to continue his efforts with a view to convening the Conference and to report thereon to the General Assembly not later than 15 May 1987;

"7. Decides to consider at its forty-second session the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the present resolution."

2. In accordance with the request contained in paragraph 6 of the resolution, consultations were held with the members of the Security Council individually during the period from February to May 1987. The purpose of these consultations was to determine their views on the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as called for by the General Assembly. The consultations also addressed the question of how such a conference should be prepared, with special reference to the proposal for setting up a preparatory committee, endorsed in paragraph 5 of the resolution.

3. All members of the Security Council were concerned about the Middle East problem, and all expressed support for a continuation of the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Moreover, in contrast with the experience of recent years, none of the Council members opposed in principle the idea of an international conference under United Nations auspices. It was clear, however, that wide differences still existed regarding the form that a conference should take. It was also generally agreed that the positions of the parties themselves remained far apart on a number of issues of procedure and of substance but that in recent months there had been indications of greater flexibility in attitudes towards the negotiating process and that this should be encouraged.

4. The members of the Council also agreed that a conference would have to be carefully prepared, but opinions were divided on the proposal for the establishment of a formal preparatory committee. Some members of the Council favoured early establishment of such a committee; others opposed the proposal or felt that further consultations would be required on this question and that the views of the parties themselves would be of especial importance in this context.

5. A first round of consultations was also held with representatives of the parties, namely the Member States directly concerned - Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic - and the Palestine Liberation Organization. These consultations, which were held in New York during March and April, were exploratory, with the objective of ascertaining the positions of the parties on the convening of the International Conference and of seeking their views as to how it should be prepared. All the parties showed interest in a settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, and some viewed it as a matter of great urgency. Again, views differed both on the form the Conference should take and on how it should be prepared, but there appeared to be a general readiness to consider options for an acceptable negotiating formula.

OBSERVATIONS

6. While it is apparent from this first round of consultations that at present, sufficient agreement does not exist to permit the convening of the International Conference as called for in resolution 41/43 D, I am determined to continue my efforts to establish a process that will lead to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. I am encouraged by the increased interest on the part of the international community in the idea of a conference that would be convened under United Nations auspices on a basis acceptable to all. I am also encouraged by the indications of greater flexibility on this issue amongst the parties, since obviously their views are of crucial importance in this matter. At the same time, it is evident that very deep differences remain between the parties, and I do not underestimate the difficulties involved in resolving those differences and in creating agreement on procedures that will permit effective negotiations to the satisfaction of all concerned. To this end, I intend, in the months to come, to intensify my contacts with the parties, in order to try to find ways of bridging the gaps between them.

7. Ever since I was first appointed Secretary-General, I have been strongly committed to the search for a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem and I have been exploring ways of achieving such a settlement. Since I last reported on this subject to the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/41/768-S/18427), I have had the opportunity to meet a number of leaders from the region, all of whom have encouraged me to make a special effort to promote the start of a negotiating process that would lead to a just and durable peace in the region. If these efforts are to prove successful, they will need the full support and understanding not only of the parties but also of the Security Council, with whose members I will continue to consult. I am convinced that it is my responsibility as Secretary-General to strengthen the resolve of those who seek a peaceful solution.

8. I will keep the General Assembly and Security Council fully informed of my continuing efforts to make progress towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.
